



The age of the Cambro-Britons: hyphenated British identities in the seventeenth century

Philip Schwyzer

To cite this article: Philip Schwyzer (2018) The age of the Cambro-Britons: hyphenated British identities in the seventeenth century, *The Seventeenth Century*, 33:4, 427-439, DOI: [10.1080/0268117X.2018.1484639](https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2018.1484639)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2018.1484639>



© 2018 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 17 Sep 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 62



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

ARTICLE



The age of the Cambro-Britons: hyphenated British identities in the seventeenth century

Philip Schwyzer 

Department of English, University of Exeter, Exeter, UK

ABSTRACT

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Welsh writers including the antiquary Humphrey Llwyd, the bard Gruffudd Hiraethog, and the epigrammatist John Owen began referring to themselves as Cambro-Britons. The term was quickly adopted and popularised by English writers, often in ways that show an imperfect grasp of the intentions behind the hyphenated phrase. Whereas the Welsh had hoped that the English and Scots would adopt similar hyphenated identities, English writers tended to interpret “Cambro-Briton” as an intensified and potentially comical expression of Welshness. Though Welsh writers largely ceased to employ the term after the 1620s, the use and misuse of “Cambro-Briton” in English texts continued unabated throughout the century.

KEYWORDS

Wales; Humphrey Llwyd; Michael Drayton; britishness; national identity; hyphenated identity

One effect of the 2016 Brexit referendum was to throw into the limelight some stark contradictions in the structure of national identity in the UK – and to precipitate more. According to post-referendum polling, voters in England who identified themselves as more English than British were overwhelmingly likely to vote Leave.¹ Voters who felt more British than English, or simply British rather than English, voted in the majority to Remain. In Wales and Scotland, however, the position was reversed. Voters in those countries who identified primarily as Welsh or Scottish opted in the majority to Remain, whilst those who identified primarily or exclusively as British were more likely to vote Leave.² As these figures suggest, the general crisis of national identity in twenty-first century Britain is both characterised and exacerbated by persistent asymmetries. Welshness, Scottishness, and Englishness are generally assumed to be cognate identities, whether defined by descent or country of residence; yet these national identities are not configured in the same way in relation to Britishness, nor to one another, nor to the various ethnic and religious identities with which they may coincide.

For the English, since the eighteenth century, the distinction between Englishness and Britishness has tended to present itself as that between a cultural or ethnic identity on the one hand and a civic or political identity on the other. There is thus comparatively little difficulty in regarding oneself as equally English and British (as a plurality of England’s inhabitants do and have long done).³ Scottishness and Welshness, however, present a more complex mixture of ethnic and civic elements, and Britishness, from the

perspective of these nations, can be associated with English cultural hegemony as much as with the political union. To be equally Scottish and British is thus a rather more challenging stance to adopt than the equivalent position in England, and it is no surprise that fewer people in Scotland confess to this compound identity. One way of cutting through this web of asymmetries would be to argue that, from the differing perspective of each British nation, “Britishness is just Englishness writ large”.⁴ Yet these asymmetries in the structure of national identity significantly predate the eighteenth century, when the conventional coupling of Englishness and Britishness first took hold. The structural crisis of national identity within Britain is not at all new, though recent referenda have made it once again news. This article will focus on a period when the meanings and relationships between terms like Welsh, English, and British were in flux, as they are today – and will explore an attempt to resolve that earlier crisis (ultimately, I shall argue, a failed attempt), by an innovative piece of hyphenation: the term “Cambro-Briton”.⁵

In 1572, the Cologne press of Johann Birkmann printed the first early modern treatise on the topography and antiquities of Britain, Humphrey Llwyd’s *Commentarioli Britannicae descriptionis fragmentum*. The title page attributes the work to “Auctore Humfredo Lhuyd, Denbyghiense, Cambro-Britanno”. This earliest printed instance of the hyphenated Latin term *Cambro-Britannus* was swiftly followed by the first example of the English equivalent. Published in London a year later, Thomas Twyne’s translation, *The Breviary of Britain*, names the author as “Humphrey Llwyd of Denbigh, a Cambre Britayne”. On both the Latin and the English title pages, the name of Britain appears twice, first with reference to the entire island, and then with reference to a particular national community within it. “Cambro-Britanno” thus describes a relation of part to whole. Although Llwyd had died in 1568 (the posthumous publication of his research being overseen by his friend, Abraham Ortelius), it appears likely that Cambro-Briton was his preferred term, at least in the context of this work, both for himself and for the Welsh people generally. The Latin text includes further reference to “meis Cambrobritannis”.⁶ Twyne, not overly familiar with the term, translates this phrase as “my countrymen the Britons in Wales”.⁷

Llwyd’s earlier history of Wales, *Cronica Walliae* (1559), features no reference to Cambro-Britons. In that text Llwyd, like other Welsh and English writers of the Middle Ages and sixteenth century, tends either to use the terms “British” and “Welsh” interchangeably (as in “the Britons or Welshmen”), or uses “Britons” to refer to an ancient people whose modern descendants include the Cornish and Bretons as well as the Welsh.⁸ There is no hint in *Cronica Walliae* that the modern inhabitants of Scotland and England are also in some sense Britons. Yet Llwyd’s turn from Welsh history to British chorography in *The Breviary of Britain* seems to have necessitated a more nuanced approach to national nomenclature. In a work surveying Britain as a whole, Llwyd may well have reasoned that to reserve the name of Britons for only one (or two) of the island’s peoples would be both divisive and confusing. Likewise, to skirt the question of British identity entirely, and refer only to the Welsh, English, and Scots, would defeat the treatise’s purpose in celebrating the island’s glorious Brythonic heritage.⁹ The innovative hyphenation of Cambrian and Briton suggests the existence of a range of different kinds of Britons. Although Llwyd does not employ the terms Anglo-Britannus and Scoto-Britannus in his work, the existence of these national communities is implied and in a sense conjured into being by the coinage “Cambro-Briton”.

Although Llwyd was the first Welsh writer to identify himself in print as a Cambro-Briton, he did not coin the phrase single-handed. The potential for compounding the names of Wales and Britain seems to have attracted the collective interest of a community of scholars and poets based in early Elizabethan Denbighshire, including Llwyd, the bard Gruffudd Hiraethog, and the prominent humanist William Salesbury.¹⁰ In 1561, Gruffudd presented the gentleman Richard Mostyn, a sometime absentee in England, with a poetic anthology entitled *Lloegr drigiant ddifyrrwch Brytanaidd Gymro*.¹¹ The title may be translated literally as “Entertainment for a British Welshman dwelling in England”. The phrase “British Welshman” might be taken to suggest that Welshness is the broader of the two identities, and that only certain Welshmen (perhaps those living in England?) are British. Probably, however, Gruffudd is simply reversing the expected order of noun and adjective, a common technique in Welsh poetry (“*hydref ddail*”). Whatever the grammatical relation, Gruffudd’s *Brytanaidd Gymro*, like Llwyd’s *Cambro-Britannus*, forms a compound phrase from two terms which had heretofore been regarded as largely synonymous. Gruffudd and Llwyd were well known to one another, and discussions between them, perhaps extending to Salesbury and others, are likely to lie behind Llwyd’s eventual public adoption of a Cambro-British identity.

The new phrase “Cambre Britayne” or Cambro-Briton first came to the notice of English readers through Llwyd’s *Breviary of Britain*, and a number of early uses involve direct or indirect reference to Llwyd’s works. In a letter of 1574 to the French Protestant scholar Hubert Languet, Sir Philip Sidney refers to Llwyd as “our poor Cambro-Briton” (*miserum nostrum cambrobritannum*) and seeks to defend Llwyd against Languet’s strictures, whilst getting in some jokes of his own at the Welsh antiquary’s expense.¹² Although there is no evidence in the letter that Sidney was directly acquainted with Llwyd’s scholarship beyond what Languet had reported to him, his use of the term *Cambrobritannus* (which Languet does not employ in his letter to Sidney) suggests that he knew this to be Llwyd’s term of preference; it is not clear whether Sidney understands the term to refer to the Welsh generally, or more specifically to one recently deceased Welsh author. Echoing Llwyd’s own “*meis Cambrobritannis*”, Sidney’s use of the possessive pronoun involves an expression of affinity or kinship shading – as in a good many English examples that follow in the seventeenth century – into condescension.

Among Llwyd’s staunchest admirers in the early seventeenth century was the poet Michael Drayton, an avowed Cambrophile. In the front-matter of his *Poly-Olbion* (1612) – a poem which, like Llwyd’s *Breviary* and William Camden’s *Britannia*, sets out to survey the whole of Britain – Drayton includes a special address to “My Friends, the Cambro-Britons”. Understanding that Welsh readers may be particularly interested in the poetic representation of their own nation, the preface is intended to help them “without difficulty understand, how in this my intended progresse, through these united kingdomes of great Britaine, I have placed your (and I must confesse) my loved Wales...” Although Drayton applies the term “Cambro-Britons” to the Welsh generally, he also includes special reference to “my much loved (the learned) Humfrey Floyd” whose influence has inspired him “to uphold [the] auncient bounds” of Wales.¹³ The epistle carries echoes of Llwyd’s title pages, with the close positioning of “great Britaine” in relation to the more geographically localised “Cambro-Britons”. The idea of the

Cambro-Briton is also closely tied to the theme of antiquity “which Wales may highly boast of”. Like both Llwyd and Sidney and before him, Drayton couples the term with a possessive pronoun, the first of several in the brief preface (“my friends the Cambro-Britons”, “my ... Wales”, “my ... Floyd”). This locution serves to heighten the sense of affinity between the English writer and his Welsh audience, a connection already implicit in the term Cambro-Briton. At the same time it conveys – intentionally or otherwise – a whiff of condescension, further heightened by the poet’s professed concern that his Welsh readers may find the poem difficult to understand.

In the 1612 edition of *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton’s largely positive address to the Cambro-Britons is countered on the facing page by the more severe opinion of the legal scholar John Selden, who supplied the learned annotations to Drayton’s songs. Drayton and Selden were drastically mismatched in their approaches to the British past. In his own epistle to the readers of the book, Selden begins by disclaiming any faith in the British History, with its “intollerable Antichronismes, incredible reports, and Bardish impostures”:

Being not very Prodigall of my Historicall Faith, after Explanation, I oft adventure on Examination, and Censure. The Author, in Passages of first Inhabitants, Name, State, and Monarchique succession in this Isle, followes Geffrey ap Arthur, Polychronicon, Matthew of Westminster, and such more. Of their Traditions, for that one so much controverted, and by Cambro-Britons still maintayned, touching the Trojan Brute, I have (but as an Advocat for the Muse) argued; disclaiming in it, if alledg’d for my own Opinion.¹⁴

Like Drayton, Selden associates the Cambro-Briton with a love for the ancient past, but in this case that love is unmasked as a devotion to false traditions. His annotations contain several further references to the Cambro-Britons, sometimes disparaging their credulity – “These things are the more enforst by Cambro-Britons, through that universall desire, bewitching our Europe, to derive their bloud from Trojans” – at other times more neutrally, as when he applies the term to the great (Cambro-Norman) medieval authority, Gerald of Wales.¹⁵

Poly-Olbion thus provides a range of interconnected meanings and connotations of the term Cambro-Briton, including:

- (a) A term associated specifically with the scholarship and national vision of Humphrey Llwyd;
- (b) A term deemed to demonstrate politeness and respect;
- (c) A term highlighting the Welsh love of the past;
- (d) A term applicable to Welsh people in the past;
- (e) A term appropriate when highlighting the stubbornness and foibles of the Welsh, especially as regards antiquity;
- (f) A condescending term, in which mock-respect provides matter for more or less affectionate amusement.

To deal for the moment with sense “a”, the term Cambro-Briton or Cambro-Britannus would continue to be associated specifically with Llwyd throughout the seventeenth century. Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) cites “Humfry Lluyd ... [a] Cambro-Britaine himselfe” on the Welsh fondness for dairy

products, and the antiquary William Burton defers to “the learned Cambro-Briton, Humphrey Lhuyd”.¹⁶ Writing after the Restoration in celebration of the Stuarts’ Welsh descent, Percy Enderbie describes “Mr. Floyd, or Lloyd, a Cambro-Brittain”, as “one who for his knowledge may justly challenge an eminent place amongst our Antiquaries”, but differs with him on the etymology of Britain.¹⁷ With or without specific reference to the author, the term “Cambro-Briton” often connotes a Llwydian vision in which the Welsh language and cultural community embody an otherwise unavailable link to the antique and early medieval past. John Speed in his *History of Great Britain* (1611) discusses the predilection of the ancient Britons for painting themselves blue, “which colour the Cambro-Britannes doe yet call glace”.¹⁸ The close association of the Cambro-Briton with Welsh antiquity misled some English writers into believing the term was itself antique; thus Richard Johnson could write of “Saint David, the Champion for Wales, at that time entituled Camber-Britannia”.¹⁹

Although Llwyd may have coined the phrase, he claimed no monopoly on it, and a number of other Welsh writers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century would define themselves or their language as *Cambro-Britannus* or *Cambro-Britannicae*, especially when addressing an international or European audience. The compound term is applied to the language formerly known as Welsh in Siôn Dafydd Rhys’s ground-breaking grammar, *Cambrobrytannicae Cymraecaeve Linguae Institutiones et Rudimenta* (1592), and subsequently in Thomas Wiliems’ manuscript *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae et Cambrobrytannicae* (c. 1620) and John Davies of Mallwyd’s *Antiquae linguae Britannicae, nunc communiter dictae Cambro-Britannicae, à suis Cymraecae vel Cambricae, ab aliis Wallicae rudimenta* (1621). The term was applied posthumously to the Welsh Catholic Owen Lewis (d. 1594), Bishop of Cassano and founder of the English College or (as he had planned to call it) *Seminarium Britannicum* at Rome. The inscription on the marble plaque over his grave at the English College begins “D. O. M. Audoeno Ludovico Cambro-Britanno...” and proceeds to a long list of his ecclesiastical and academic positions.²⁰ It is tempting to suppose that the notorious controversy between English and “British” students at the College, gleefully recorded by Anthony Munday in *The English Roman Life*, may have prompted Lewis to define his national identity with particular care.²¹ The phrase occurs again at the English College in the epitaph of the Catholic exile and suspected Gunpowder conspirator Hugh Owen (d. 1618), memorialised as *Hugoni Odoeno Nobili Cambro Britanno Carnaviensi*.²²

In his will, the Hugh Owen who was buried in Rome disinherited his nephew and presumptive heir John Owen, who had written vehemently against the Catholic Church. Yet their differences did not extend to national nomenclature, for in all of the many editions of Owen’s epigrams (the first in 1606), the author is identified on the title page as Cambro-Britannus. In later seventeenth-century literature the compound epithet is applied to Owen as frequently as it is to Llwyd, and he exerted a powerful influence over other Welsh epigrammatists and poets. Sir John Stradling acknowledged Owen as his inspiration, and in his own *Epigrammatum Libri Quatuor* (1607) addressed his Welsh relatives and connections (including his cousin Sir Edward Stradling, from whom he would inherit the estate of St Donat’s in 1609) as *Cambrobritannii*.²³ In the second decade of the seventeenth century, the poets John Davies of Hereford and Hugh Holland of Denbighshire identified themselves as Cambro-Britons in verses contributed to English publications.²⁴ The Welsh clergyman and future Bishop of Gloucester,

Godfrey Goodman, did not apply the title to himself, but instructed the English readers of his *Fall of Man* (1616) that it was proper to refer to “the Cambro-Britaines (whom we improperly call Welsh).”²⁵

Although the list of Welsh writers who employed the term is fairly extensive, it is not necessarily indicative of a wider embrace of the hyphenated identity in Elizabethan and Jacobean Wales. Tellingly, most of the authors mentioned above participated in one or several of a small number of overlapping communities, connected by geography as well as by various scholarly, religious, or familial ties. The term seems to have originated in Denbighshire, home not only to Gruffudd Hiraethog and Llwyd in the mid-sixteenth century but to Holland and Goodman in a later generation. Most of the others who employed the term also hailed from North Wales (Thomas Wiliems and Hugh and John Owen from Caernarfonshire, Siôn Dafydd Rhys and Owen Lewis from Anglesey.) Catholicism provides a further link between not only the priests Owen Lewis and Hugh Owen, but also Hugh Holland and Siôn Dafydd Rhys (both of whom travelled in Italy), and probably Thomas Wiliems; Llwyd’s religious sympathies remain somewhat murky, but he served with Hugh Owen in the household of the Catholic Earl of Arundel, and the two apparently travelled together to the continent in 1566.²⁶ Even an apparent outlier like John Stradling, who was born in Bristol, is connected to these networks by more than one link, dedicating epigrams to both John Owen and Siôn Dafydd Rhys, who had earlier dedicated his Welsh grammar to Sir Edward Stradling. In light of the web of relationships that binds the majority of Welsh writers who favoured the hyphenated phrase, there is little reason to suppose that the term “Cambro-Briton” was ever in very widespread use in seventeenth-century Wales.

However, the term was never really intended for domestic consumption. Humphrey Llwyd had adopted it in a treatise written for an international scholarly audience. Most later writers who used the phrase (including John Owen, Stradling, Holland, John Davies of Hereford, Goodman, and the authors of the Roman epitaphs) were likewise writing primarily for non-Welsh eyes, be they those of English readers or continental Europeans. These were the audiences to whom the epithet’s implicit argument – that Britishness was the common identity of the island’s inhabitants, rather than something specific to the Welsh – was directed. The union of the crowns under James VI and I added urgency and pith to the argument, as seen in Owen’s 1606 epigram “Cambro-Britannus”:

Tecum participant in nomine Scotus et Anglus
Iam tu non solus, Walle, Britannus eris.

[Scot and Englishman join in a name with you,

Now, Welshman, you will not be the only Briton.]²⁷

Sir John Stradling a year later makes the same point in an imitative epigram:

Anglo-Britannus, Scoto-Britannus, Cambro-Britannus
Una acclememus voce, Britannus ego.

[Anglo-Briton, Scoto-Briton, Cambro-Briton,

Let us proclaim with one voice, *I am a Briton*.]²⁸

Owen's and Stradling's optimistic epigrams highlight a striking and rather poignant absence in national nomenclature. Where were the Anglo-Britons and the Scoto-Britons? By comparison to Cambro-Briton, these parallel compounds remain surprisingly rare throughout the seventeenth century. It is true that John Price, the Catholic classical scholar and editor of Apuleius, referred to himself as "Anglo-Britannus" or "Anglo-Britannicus", and the literary celebrity James Howell described himself as "Brit-Anglo" in at least one printed work.²⁹ Yet both Price and Howell were of Welsh extraction (the former born to Welsh parents in London, the latter hailing from Carmarthenshire), and it seems likely that in each case they were using "Britannus" as a synonym for "Welsh". For these writers, "Anglo-Britannus" or "Brit-Anglo" did not connote an English Briton, but something closer to Anglo-Welsh (a notoriously problematic hyphenation in itself). The question of Howell's mixed identity was subsequently resolved, with or without his consent, on his monument in Temple Church, describing him as Cambro-Britannus.³⁰

There are a handful of further examples, hardly indicative of a widespread cultural movement. The printer Henry Holland called himself "Anglo-Britannus" on the title page of his *Heroologia Anglica* (1620); but he may have done so in part to distinguish himself from his avowedly Cambro-British contemporary Hugh Holland, as well as to provide a counterpoint to John Davies of Hereford, who in a poem included in the work ascribes himself Cambro-Britannus. The antiquary Sir Henry Spelman, who had written in tempered support of Anglo-Scottish union, also described himself as Anglo-Britannus.³¹ John Selden's *Jani Anglorum*, published before his contribution to *Poly-Olbion*, refers to the laws of "Anglo-Britannia" in the extended title; yet the term apparently struck readers as so obscure that an English translation later in the century includes a substantial endnote explaining the phrase (with reference, inevitably, to "Cambro-Britannia"). Slightly more willingness to identify as Anglo-British was seen in writers based on the continent; a short lived Dutch journal *Mercurius Anglo-Britannus* was published in The Hague in 1648, and throughout the century a number of English students at continental universities registered as Anglo-Britanni.³² By and large, however, even English writers who fully grasped the implications of the term Cambro-Briton were reluctant to adopt the parallel compound term for their own nation. Thus, the clergyman William Sclater quotes Humphrey Llwyd on the "temper of his countrimen, the Cambro-Britannus" and proceeds to draw a contrast with "wee, Britans of t'other race" – a striking but by no means unusual degree of reticence regarding the relationship between Englishness and Britishness.³³

Yet whilst English writers showed very little interest in identifying themselves as Anglo-Britons, their enthusiasm for the phrase Cambro-Briton continued unabated throughout the century. In some cases, the phrase was taken (as Llwyd had intended it) as a hallmark of British unity. Arguing in 1642 for full political union between England, Scotland and Ireland, Henry Parker observed that "if the name of Hiberno-Britaines may not be applied to the Irish, as Cambro-Britaines is to the Welsh; yet now Scottish, English, Welsh, and the mixt Irish being so indifferently blended in Ireland ... it must be wilfull neglect in us, if we do not close yet more amiably together".³⁴ Even as he upholds the Cambro-Briton as an embodiment of the principle that all should follow, Parker stops short of arguing that other British nations should adopt comparably hyphenated identities. In his catalogue of united British peoples, the Cambro-Britons stand apart, paradoxically distinct from their British peers by their greater

commitment to union. The same point may be made regarding the joyful chorus of the royalist song *The Cock-crowing at the Approach of a Free Parliament* (1659):

Then of with your pots English, Irish, and Scots,
And loyall Cambro-brittaines,
From Lobster-like Jump
And the head-playing Rump
You'l soon have an acquittance.³⁵

English poets also found the phrase useful in laying claim to historical Welsh achievements from the period before the Acts of Union. Charles Fitz-Geffry's 1596 elegy for Sir Francis Drake, which features a catalogue of great English travellers by land and sea, includes among their number "Renowned Madocke, Princes sonne of Wales,/Brave Cambro-britton uncontroll'd by might".³⁶ The legend of Madoc, son of Owain Gwynedd, and his twelfth-century voyage to America is recorded in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589), where Humphrey Llwyd (the first reporter of the tradition, in *Cronica Walliae*) is among the sources cited. The mention of Llwyd may have prompted Fitz-Geffry to write "Cambro-Briton", but chiefly the phrase serves as a way of including the Welsh Madoc within a list of English adventurers. A similar end is in view in Christopher Brooke's *The Ghost of Richard III* (1614), where the tyrant laments that "Richmond comes on... / Seeling the Back of his great enterprize, / With Cambro-Brittaines, men of taintlesse Name".³⁷ Here the use of the hyphenated term both casts the contest for the English throne as a British matter, and recognises the Welsh stake in the question. Whereas Shakespeare's Richard III castigates Richmond's followers as "a scum of Britons", lumping together the Welsh and Bretons as unwelcome foreigners, Brooke's Richard is forced to acknowledge that the Welsh at least are fellow-countrymen.³⁸ The passage may even hint at a parallel between Henry Tudor and James I as bringers of British unity.

Rather more common, however, are texts in which the Cambro-Briton is exposed to mockery, the hackneyed terms of humiliation made the more acute by the supposed dignity of the long-winded title. The game here is to point out that, despite the politically correct phrase considered "proper" nowadays, the Welsh are still the Welsh; the old rules still apply. In 1609 we find William Rowley reviving a timeworn national stereotype as he lists the foods favoured by different nationalities: "Roots for the French-man a Pippin Pye for your Irishman, and a péece of chéese for the Cambro-Brittans".³⁹ John Page mocked the equally stereotypical Welsh obsession with tracing their genealogies: "our Cambro-Britanni can derive their descent from the Moon, but other Nations are not so happy".⁴⁰ And James Smith found a new rhyme for Cambro-Briton as he memorialised Alexander Gill, the notoriously brutal master of Paul's School:

A Welch man once was whipt there,
Untill be did beshit him,
His Cuds-Pluttera Nail,
Could not prevail,
For he whipt the Cambro brittain.⁴¹

"Cuds-Pluttera Nail" (or "Cats Plutter a Nails") is the commonplace oath of the comic or stage Welshman in moments of exasperation. A little corporal punishment, Page

suggests, is all it takes to bring out the Taffy hiding within the Cambro-Briton. The linguistic quirks of the stage Welshman are also on display in the Civil War newsletter *Mercurius Cambro-Britannus*, in which news of military action in Wales and the west is mingled with tales of Merlin and digressions on leeks and cheese, all delivered in a mock Welsh voice: “her swore to her to by Saint Taffy, that tere was create hope tat te Parliament forces was have pig successes, and tat her Garrison at Plimmouth have pravelly defended temselves ...”.⁴²

Such openly mocking references are the tip of an iceberg of subtler, sustained condescension. Awareness of the English reception and use of the term, combined with disappointment at the failure of other British nations to adopt comparable hyphenated identities, may have contributed to the marked decline in the use of Cambro-Briton among Welsh writers, especially as a self-designation, from around 1620. The few who still employed the term were usually interested in marking a relationship to writers of an earlier generation. Following the lead of Siôn Dafydd Rhys and Thomas Wiliems, John Davies of Mallwyd used the hyphenated *Cambro-Britannicae* in the title of his Welsh grammar (1621) and subsequent dictionary (1632).⁴³ In 1646, Roger Lort of Pembrokeshire nominated himself Cambro-Britannus in a book of epigrams, unmistakably modelling himself on John Owen. After this, there are few examples to be found beyond Alexander Griffith, the royalist clergyman who revived the old title of *Mercurius Cambro-Britannicus* to petition Parliament in 1652, and Thomas Jones who, as late as 1678 still hoped that the Scots and English might follow the Cambro-Britons’ lead by identifying as Alban-Britons and Loegrian Britons.⁴⁴

As employed by Humphrey Llwyd and a range of other Welsh authors writing in three languages, the terms Cambro-Britannus, Brytanaidd Gymro, and Cambro-Briton had sought to demonstrate the relationship between a core identity (that of Briton) and a more local, modifying identity (Welsh or Cambrian). English writers who used the term, whether they did so in mockery or simply declined to apply the equivalent hyphenated identity to their own nation, seem to have interpreted the phrase rather as a fusion of two versions of Welsh identity, and thus as an intensified expression of Welshness. Rather than functioning like “London Irish” or “African-American”, in other words, Cambro-Briton as employed by the English more closely resembled “Anglo-American” or “Judeo-Christian”, terms which by emphasising common traits and values within the group draw a powerful boundary between insiders and outsiders. The Cambro-Briton, in English eyes, was not a certain kind of Briton, but a true or absolute Briton. In other words, a real Welshman.

The English adoption and adaptation of “Cambro-Briton” in the seventeenth century, and the consequent abandonment of the term by almost all Welsh writers, marked the failure of a certain project. Though the hyphenated phrase lived on, by 1625 the age of the Cambro-Britons was over. Perhaps, however, we should only regard the period 1560–1625 as the First Age of the Cambro-Britons. The name would rise again, in and after the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ Early in the nineteenth century, the short-lived journal *The Cambro-Briton* (1819–22) proclaimed its aim “to diffuse amongst strangers a knowledge of the history, the manners, the genius of Wales, and to extend beyond her mountain barriers the fame of those literary treasure, which are now, as it were, covetously hoarded within them”.⁴⁶ *The Cambro-Briton* thus sought to distinguish itself from other Welsh periodicals which, whether in Welsh or English, were addressed primarily to a native audience. The aim of diffusing knowledge

amongst strangers is one that Humphrey Llwyd would have warmed to, but the shift in emphasis is unmistakable. To call oneself a Cambro-Briton in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century was to say, “I am British, but I am ready to share this title with others”. To use the phrase in the eighteenth or (still more) the nineteenth century was to say, “I am Welsh, but my patriotism is not narrow; I wish to be recognised as British too”. The early modern Cambro-Britons saw themselves as graciously offering inclusion to others under the mantle of Britishness. The Cambro-Britons of later centuries were struggling to ensure that their own Britishness was not forgotten, that they might be included themselves.

Notes

1. “EU Referendum ‘How Did You Vote’ Poll; Online Fieldwork: 21st-23 June 2016”; <https://lordashcroftpolls.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/How-the-UK-voted-Full-tables-1.pdf>. The pollster contacted 12,369 voters, including 10,468 in England, 1102 in Scotland, 629 in Wales, and 170 in Northern Ireland.
2. The polling question in Northern Ireland was slightly different, asking respondents to state which identities applied to them, but not requiring them to rank one over another. Those who identified themselves as either “Irish” or “Northern Irish” voted in majority to Remain, whilst those identifying as “British” or “British and Northern Irish” voted to Leave. By a small margin, a majority in Northern Ireland voted to Remain.
3. “Devolution: Trends in National Identity”. See Langlands, “Britishness or Englishness?”.
4. Langlands, “Britishness or Englishness?”, 64. Langlands concludes that “there is not (and never has been) one single variant of Britishness” (64), although it has tended to be “constructed largely in English terms” (54).
5. The hallmarks of the Cambro-British identity and the careers of some notable Elizabethan and Jacobean Cambro-Britons have been explored previously in Jones, “The Welsh Gentry”, and Roberts, “Tudor Wales”. The present essay attempts to focus more narrowly, perhaps myopically, on the career of the hyphenated phrase itself.
6. Llwyd, *Commentarioli Britannicae descriptionis fragmentum*, 5^v.
7. Llwyd, *Breviary of Britain*, 56.
8. Llwyd, *Cronica Walliae*, 87, 89. Cf. Salesbury, *Briefe and a Playne Introduction*, sig. Bi^{r-v}; Salesbury, *Ban wedy i dynny*, sig. Aiii^r.
9. Llwyd’s argument that the ancient Britons had inhabited the whole island, with the Scots, Picts, and Anglo-Saxons all being relative late-comers, particularly infuriated George Buchanan and later Scottish historians.
10. I am deeply grateful to Paul Bryant-Quinn for communicating his research on Denbighshire’s intellectual networks, and for alerting me to Gruffudd Hiraethog’s significance in this story, as well as to the use of “Cambro-Briton” by a number of Welsh Catholics on the continent, discussed below. Salesbury (c. 1520–1584), though he is not known to have exchanged his habitual “British or Welsh” for “Cambro-British”, was the luminary and linchpin of this north Welsh intellectual community.
11. NLW MS Peniarth 155 includes a copy by Rhisiart Phylip of the 1561 compilation. On the manuscript, see Harper, *Music in Welsh Culture*, 33, 89–91. Harper translates *Brytanaidd Gymro* as “Welsh-speaking Welshman”. See also Carr, “The Mostyns of Mostyn”, 22.
12. Sidney to Hubert Languet, Padua, 11 February 1574, in *Correspondence of Philip Sidney*, 113. Sidney’s father, Sir Henry, as Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales, would take an interest in Llwyd’s work and support David Powel in revising Llwyd’s *Cronica Walliae* for publication as *The Historie of Cambria* (1584). Whether Sir Henry’s interest in Llwyd was established and known to his son as early as 1574 is unclear. See Schwyzer, “Happy Place”.
13. Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, A1^v.
14. Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, A2^r.

15. Drayton, *Poly-Olbion*, 18, 148.
16. Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 100; William Burton, *Commentary on Antoninus*, 89.
17. Enderbie, *Cambria Triumphans*, 3.
18. Speed, *History of Great Britaine*, 180.
19. Johnson, *Famous Historie*, sig. Aa3^v (part of the concluding section added to the 1616 edition of this frequently reprinted text).
20. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, vol. 1, 612. I am grateful to Paul Bryant-Quinn for bringing the epitaphs for Owen Lewis and Hugh Owen (below) in the English College to my attention.
21. See Nice, *Sacred History and National Identity*, Ch. 6; Munday, *English Romaine Lyfe*, 56–67.
22. Champ, *Memorial Inscriptions*, 75–7; “Monumental Inscriptions at Rome”, 130. The memorial plaque is now situated on the external wall of the English College.
23. Stradling, *Ioannis Stradlingi Epigrammatum libri quatuor*; on Owen: 159; *Cambro-Britannus*: 3, 72.
24. “Hugo Holland Cambro-Britannus” in Coryate, *Odcombian Banquet*, sig. G1^v. “I. D. Cambro-Britannus” in Henry Holland, *Heroologia Anglica*, 241.
25. Goodman, *Fall of Man*, sig. A6v. As earlier writers, including Llwyd, had observed, “Welsh” was not a native word, but a Germanic term descriptive of foreigners.
26. See “Owen, Hugh”, *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*; “Llwyd, Humphrey”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
27. Owen, *Epigrammatum Libri Tres*, 64.
28. Stradling, *Ioannis Stradlingi Epigrammatum libri quatuor*, 176.
29. James Howell, *Angliae suspiria, & lachrymae . . . Aut: Ia: Howell, Arm. Brit. Anglo* (1646). On Price, see Carver, *Protean Ass*, 347; Pennington, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 259, no. 1485.
30. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, vol. 2, 269.
31. For Spelman and a handful of others, see Murdoch, *Network North*, 68–73. The Scottish situation is broadly similar; while a handful of Scottish writers identified themselves as Scoto-Britannus, they did so almost always in the context of the union question in the reign of James I, or where addressing a continental audience where clarity seemed vital; for examples see Murdoch, 64–67.
32. Weduwen, *Dutch and Flemish Newspapers*, 579–80; Murdoch, *Network North*, 71–72.
33. Sclater, *Briefe Exposition*, 298–99.
34. Parker, *Generall Junto*, 21.
35. *Cock-crowing at the approach of a free-parliament*, chorus.
36. Fitz-Geffrey, *Sir Francis Drake*, sig. E4^v.
37. Brooke, *Ghost of Richard III*, sig. K3^v.
38. See Schwyzer, “A Scum of Britons?”.
39. Rowley, *A Search for Money*, 22.
40. Page, *Jus Fratrum*, 37. Note how the possessive pronoun rears its head again.
41. Smith, “On Doctor Gill, Master of Paul’s School”, in *Loves of Hero and Leander*, 55.
42. *Mercurius Cambro-Britannus . . . from Friday November 11, till Munday the 20. 1643*, 5.
43. A subtle shift may be noted between the titles of Davies’ *Antiquae linguae Britannicae, nunc communiter dictae Cambro-Britannicae .. rudimenta* (1621) and *Antiquae linguae Britannicae, nunc vulgò dictae Cambro-Britannicae...dictionarium duplex* (1632). The change from “communiter” to “vulgò” may indicate an intensified scepticism about the appropriateness of the term, though both words can mean “commonly”.
44. Thomas Jones, *Of the Heart and its Right Sovereign*, 247. See also Edwards, *Hebraismorum Cambro-Britannicorum specimen*.
45. On self-declared Cambro-Britons in the eighteenth century, see Prescott, *Eighteenth-century Writing from Wales*; Jenkins, *Between Wales and England*.
46. “Introductory Address”, 2.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Paul Bryant-Quinn, Daniel Cattell, and Ceri Davies for their vital suggestions and comments.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by two AHRC Research Grants: The Poly-Olbion Project [AH/K005073/1] and Inventor of Britain: The Works of Humphrey Llwyd [AH/P00704X/1].

ORCID

Philip Schwyzer  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2381-4424>

Bibliography

- Brooke, C. *The Ghost of Richard III*. London, 1614.
- Burton, R. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. London, 1621.
- Burton, W. *A Commentary on Antoninus, His Itinerary, Or, Journies of the Romane Empire*. London, 1658.
- Carr, A. D. "The Mostyns of Mostyn, 1540-1642 (Part I)". *Journal of the Flintshire Historical Society* 28 (1978): 17–38.
- Carver, R. H. F. *The Protean Ass: The Metamorphoses of Apuleius from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Champ, J. *Memorial Inscriptions in the Venerable English College, Rome*. Rome: Il Venerabile Collegio Inglese, 2012.
- The Cock-Crowing at the Approach of a Free-Parliament*. 1659.
- Coryate, T. *The Odcombian Banquet*. London, 1611.
- Davies, J. *Antiquae linguae Britannicae, nunc communiter dictae Cambro-Britannicae .. rudimenta*. London, 1621.
- Davies, J. *Antiquae linguae Britannicae, nunc vulgò dictae Cambro-Britannicae...dictionarium duplex*. London, 1632.
- "Devolution: Trends in National Identity". *British Social Attitudes* 30 (2013). <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-30/devolution/trends-in-national-identity.aspx>
- Drayton, M. *Poly-Olbion*. London, 1612.
- Edwards, C. *Hebraismorum Cambro-Britannicorum specimen honorandis antiquae Brittanicae gentis primoribus*. London, 1675.
- Enderbie, P. *Cambria Triumphans, Or, Brittain in Its Perfect Lustre*. London, 1661.
- Fitz-Geffrey, C. *Sir Francis Drake His Honorable Lifes Commendation, and His Tragicall Deathes Lamentation*. London, 1596.
- Goodman, G. *The Fall of Man, or the Corruption of Nature, Proved by the Light of Our Natural Reason*. London, 1616.
- Harper, S. *Music in Welsh Culture before 1650: A Study of the Principal Sources*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.
- Holland, H. *Heroologia Anglica*. London, 1620.
- Howell, J. *Angliae suspiria, & lachrymae ... Aut: Ia: Howell, Arm. Brit. Anglo*. 1646.
- "Introductory Address". *The Cambro-Briton* 1, no. 1 (September 1819): 1–5.

- Jenkins, B. M. *Between Wales and England: Anglophone Welsh Writing of the Eighteenth Century*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017.
- Johnson, R. *The Famous Historie of the Seaven Champions of Christendome*. London, 1616.
- Jones, J. G. "The Welsh Gentry and the Image of the 'Cambro-Briton', C. 1603-1625". *Welsh History Review* 20 (2001): 615-655.
- Jones, T. *Of the Heart and Its Right Sovereign, and Rome No Mother-Church to England, Or, an Historical Account of the Title of Our British Church*. London, 1678.
- Langlands, R. "Britishness or Englishness? the Historical Problem of National Identity in Britain". *Nations and Nationalism* 5 (1999): 53-69.
- Llwyd, H. *The Breviary of Britain, with Selections from the History of Cambria*. Edited by Philip Schwyzer. London: MHRA, 2011.
- Llwyd, H. *Commentarioli Britannicae descriptionis fragmentum*. Cologne, 1572.
- Llwyd, H. *Cronica Walliae*. Edited by Ieuan M. Williams and J. Beverley Smith. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002.
- Mercurius Cambro-Britannus, the Brittish Mercury, Or, the Welch Diurnall ... from Friday November 11, till Munday the 20. 1643*. London, 1643.
- "Monumental Inscriptions at Rome". *Archaeologia Cambrensis* n.s. 4 (1853): 130-132.
- Munday, A. *The English Romaine Lyfe*. London, 1582.
- Murdoch, S. *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe, 1603-1746*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Nice, J. *Sacred History and National Identity: Comparisons between Early Modern Wales and Brittany*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.
- Owen, J. *Epigrammatum Libri Tres*. London, 1606.
- Page, J. *Jus Fratrum. The Law of Brethren*. London, 1657.
- Parker, H. *The Generall Junto or the Councell of Union, Chosen Equally Out of England, Scotland, and Ireland, for the Better Compacting of Three Nations into One Monarchy*. London, 1642.
- Pennington, R. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar 1607-1677*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Prescott, S. *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales: Bards and Britons*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008.
- Roberts, P. "Tudor Wales, National Identity, and the British Inheritance". In *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533-1707*, edited by B. Bradshaw and P. Roberts, 8-42. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Rowley, W. *A Search for Money*. London, 1609.
- Salesbury, W. *Ban wedy i dynny air yngair allan o ben gyfreith Howel [d]da*. London, 1550a.
- Salesbury, W. *A Briefe and A Playne Introduction, Teachyng How to Pronounce the Letters of the British Tong, (Now Commonly Called Walsh)*. London, 1550b.
- Schwyzer, P. "'A Happy Place of Government': Sir Henry Sidney, Wales, and the Historie of Cambria (1584)". *Sidney Journal* 29 (2011): 209-217.
- Schwyzer, P. "A Scum of Britons? Richard III and the Celtic Reconquest". In *Celtic Shakespeare: The Bard and the Borderers*, edited by W. Maley and R. Loughnane, 25-34. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.
- Sclater, W. *A Briefe Exposition with Notes, upon the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*. London, 1627.
- Sidney, P. *The Correspondence of Philip Sidney*. Vol. 1. Edited by Roger Kuin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Smith, J. *The Loves of Hero and Leander*. London, 1653.
- Speed, J. *The History of Great Britaine*. London, 1611.
- Stradling, J. *Ioannis Stradlingi Epigrammatum libri quatuor*. London, 1607.
- Weduwen, A. D. *Dutch and Flemish Newspapers of the Seventeenth Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Wood, A. Å. *Athenae Oxonienses*. Vols. 1-2. London, 1691-2.